

North Vietnam Frees 9 Americans 5 Others Held By Reds Since March

BANGKOK, Thailand (AP) — Nine Americans captured by Communist forces in South Vietnam in March, two Canadians, and three other foreigners were flown here today from Hanoi via Vientiane, Laos.

United Nations officials said all are "fit and well."

They are five American missionaries and a dependent, one American student, two U.S. government officials, two Canadian missionaries, two Filipinos, and one Australian.

Missionaries who spoke to the group at the Vientiane airport said they reported they had been taken by truck to North Vietnam in mid-August and confined near Hanoi.

The U.N. officials said the missionaries are John Miller, 45, his wife, Carolyn, 37, and their daughter, Lucille, 6, of Houghton, N.Y.; Norman and Joan Johnson, 39 and 38, of Hamilton, Canada; Richard and Lillian Phillips, 45 and 44, of Bloomington, Minn., and Betty Janet Mitchell, 56, of Bly, Ore.

The U.S. officials are Paul A. Struharik, 35, of Barberton, O.,

an official of the U.S. Agency for International Development, and James Foley Lewis, 31, of Illinois.

The American student is Jay R. Scarborough, 29, of Southern Illinois University, Carbondale.

About 40 other Americans are still in South Vietnam. Most of them are believed living in Saigon.

All of those released today except Mr. Lewis were captured in Ban Me Thuot, in the central highlands, when the Saigon government abandoned it to the Communists in March. Mrs. Mitchell's husband, Archie, was captured there in 1962 by the Viet Cong and has not been heard of since.

The returnees were flown from Hanoi aboard a Laotian airline

DC-3 chartered by the U.N. High Commission for Refugees.

"They have no complaints about their treatment. They are fit and well," one U.N. official said.

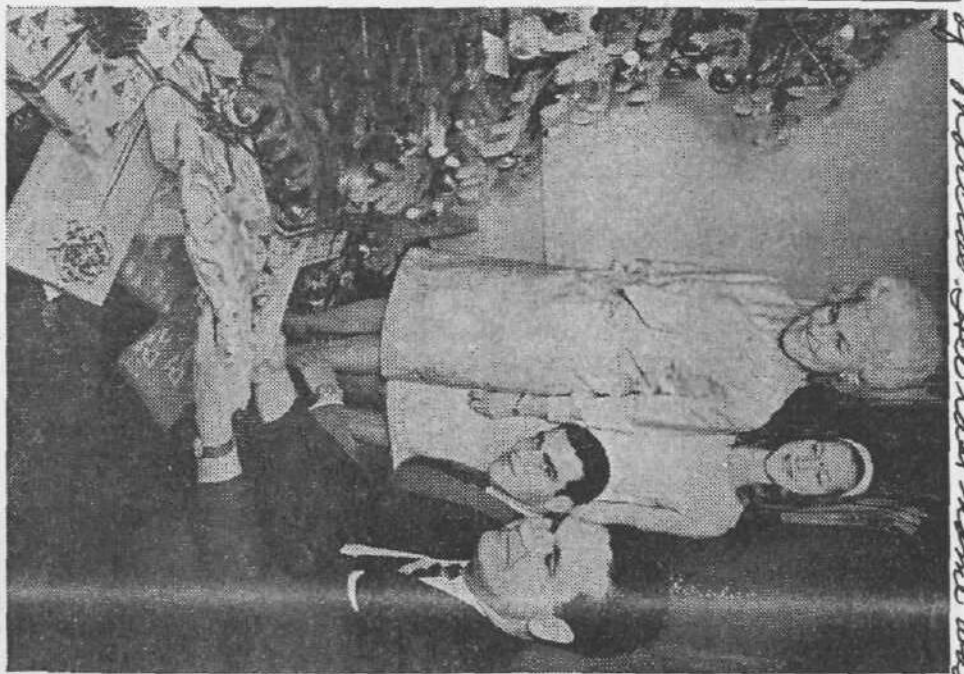
Missionaries in Vientiane said members of the group are thin but otherwise healthy. They said nine of them reported they had malaria during their captivity and some were still bothered by diarrhea.

These sources said the returnees told them that after their capture in Ban Me Thuot they were taken to Thanh Binh in Pleiku Province, and confined in grass huts for some time.

The returnees said they received a total of 200,000 piasters, about \$300 at the exchange rate before the Communists took over, and their captors allowed them 500 piasters per person a week to buy food and other necessities.

CHRISTMAS IN JUNE? The Bible Class of the Toledo Gospel Tabernacle mixed up the seasons Friday night to please the family of N. Robert Ziemer. Mr. Ziemer has spent most of his last 15 Christmases in South Vietnam as a missionary of the Tabernacle. Home on leave until July, he will return to the Southeast Asian country for another five-year term. The class decided to surprise the Ziemers with a Christmas party in the YMCA after Mr. Ziemer told them that the war mood in Viet Nam spoiled the feeling of Christmas. The Ziemers, above, open gifts with their children, Marian, 12, and Tim, 19.

—Blade Photo



This must be a relative of Marian. She last saw me in 1962.